

ARTHUR SCHNABEL

Born on 17th April, 1882, at Lipnik, close to Bialitz-Biala in Silesia, which was then Austrian Poland. His family moved to Vienna and settled there in the Leopoldstadt district. Later on they moved back to Bialitz. As a child prodigy Schnabel took lessons from Prof. Hans Schmitt; at the age of nine he became a pupil of Leschetizky under the actual tutelage of first, the maestro's wife Annette Essipov, later Malwin Bree, and even later Leschetizky himself, who finally told him that he would be a great musician but not a virtuoso pianist.

Schnabel gave his first concert in Bialitz at the age of eleven. On 12th Feb. 1897, he appeared on the Vienna concert podium in Bösendorfer Halle with extraordinary success. In 1898 he moved to Berlin, where he met the Lieder singer Therese Behr, with whom he teamed up for life. In 1902 Schnabel established his first Trio with Alfred Wittenberg, violinist, and Anton Hekking, cellist. In 1912 the second Schnabel Trio followed, with Jean Geràldy, cellist, and Karl Flesch, violin. In the third Schnabel Trio, established in 1915, Hugo Becker was the cellist, in the fourth Piatigorsky, Flesch remaining the violinist in both of them. Schnabel played in every city of Europe and made his first visit to Russia in 1911 where, among others, he played the Liszt E flat major concerto, under Mengelberg. In 1903 he played the Brahms D minor piano concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Nikisch; in London he played with the Hallé orchestra, under Weingartner; he played the Emperor concerto under Richard Strauss, whose Beethoven's Fifth was "simply fulfilment". He became friendly with the composer, even played skat with him. In recompense for his monetary losses, Strauss told him many interesting things about the significance of Beethoven's dynamics, which set Schnabel thinking and studying.

During the First World War, Schnabel's patriotism soon vanished; the privations gave him neuritis and rheumatism in the shoulder. His compositions were badly received but he kept on composing during 1919-1924, interrupting his work only for two American tours.

In 1923 he returned to the German concert platform and became professor of the Berlin Academy, taking advanced master classes. Meanwhile he kept annotating Beethoven sonatas for Ulstein, which he played in London. He took part in the Schubert year in Berlin, 1928, toured Spain in 1929, and was engaged for the Courtauld-Sargent concerts. In 1930 he resigned his professorship and made a grand tour, the highlight of which was his playing with Casals and Huberman. He moved to Italy, then to Australia, and finally to the U.S.A. where he stayed until 1946. After that more tours followed but by 1948 he was ailing. He had to keep a stringent diet and take no salt or sugar. He died in Axenstein, Switzerland, on 15th August, 1951.

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Early in his career the London critics praised his piano playing because "in spite of the virtuoso teaching and past he preserved his individuality and musical taste unimpaired". He really was an all round musician: a modern atonal composer, a teacher and annotator and last, but not least, a virtuoso. As a concert pianist he was a meaningful interpreter and an intellectual player; a constant searcher for spiritual vales and the right way (his way) of presentation. He despised and rejected all the flourishes and little tricks of the virtuoso pianist yet in his endeavour and devotion to what he felt was the music of Mozart and Beethoven, he distorted the fresh spontaneity of the one and the relentless power of the other, shrouding them with his own mystical veil.

His recording of the Beethoven sonatas remain an interesting experiment and an enjoyable feat; his recorded concerti exude unusual pianism (the repertoire was very conservative); his own compositions - among others the five string quartets, his piano trio (a mellowed composition from 1947) and various violin, cello and piano sonatas even the symphonies (he wrote three of them) - deserve a more thorough investigation than an occasional presentation of the Rhapsody as, in my opinion, it is there where he shreds his protective disguise and exposes his own ideas, manifesting not inconsiderable genius.

I should like to hope that in the end he will be judged by his own compositional heritage rather than by his pianistic attempts of a puristic approach to the immortals.

A. G. ROSS.

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THERESE BEHR-SCHNABEL recorded several songs mainly by Schubert during 1933, accompanied by her husband. She was a fine contralto who had great success with her dark-hued voice and expressive renderings in Berlin and the German provinces as late back as 1899.

She met the young Schnabel at a provincial concert party. She was six feet tall, Schnabel was only five feet four, yet a romance sprung up between the two.

Therese Behr was born in 1876 and lived in Mainz, where her father was part owner of a firm of custom designers of building, ship and home interiors, makers of fine furniture. She was endowed with a natural voice and was sent first to Julius Stockhausen in Frankfurt, later to Franz Wüllner in Cologne to study. Then for a while she studied with Etelka Gerster and appeared in Berlin, becoming a Lieder singer of the first rank in 1899.

After Schnabel's first successes the couple married in June, 1905, at the Berlin Registrar's Office. However, after some years, Therese stopped giving public concerts until, in January 1929, she sang Schubert's Schwanengesang cycle to an invited audience.

According to Historical Records by Bauer, Miss Behr made a record of her own in Berlin in 1904: D'Albert's Zur Drossel sprach der Fink, which can be found on the present disc. Lately it has been rumoured that there are a few other recordings dating from this period, but so far no definite proof has been received that such recordings exist or who has them!

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FELIX WEINGARTNER
(1863-1942.)

Paul Felix Weingartner, Edler von Munzberg, conductor and composer, was born on 2nd June, 1863, in Zara, capital of Dalmatia, now in Yugoslavia. He was brought up in Graz, Austria, where he began his studies with Dr. Wilhelm Mayer and W.A. Reny. From 1881 to 1883 he continued his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory; after that he moved to Weimar, where he came to the attention of Franz Liszt and under whose influence he wrote his two operas: "Sakuntala" and "Malawika". He also worked as a pianist and took up conducting, which eventually led him to Konigsberg at the age of only 21; engagements in Danzig and Hamburg (1912-1914) followed, and after conducting a Ring cycle in Frankfurt, he stayed in Mannheim until 1891, when he was appointed conductor to the Royal Opera House and director of the Royal orchestra in Berlin. In 1898 he gave up the post of operatic conductor in Berlin, but retained his concert engagements for some years. About the same time he moved to Munich, where he conducted the Kaim concerts. In 1908 he succeeded Mahler as conductor of the Vienna Opera. He again retired from operatic conducting in 1910, while retaining leadership of the Symphony concerts. In 1919-1920 he was director of the Vienna Volksoper.

Weingartner's fame travelled fast. He first visited London in 1898. He was appreciated as a Beethoven specialist and conducted the Royal Philharmonic, London Symphony and Scottish orchestras. His debut in America was on 10th February, 1905, with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra; in 1906 he toured with the Symphony Society; in 1912-1913 he was permanently engaged by the Boston Opera Company; he visited South America in 1920 and Japan in 1936.

Weingartner was permanent conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra until 1927. He then became director of the Basel Conservatory and leader of the Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft concerts. From 1935 he again conducted at the Vienna State Opera. After his Japanese tour he settled in Interlaken, where he led a summer conducting school. He died in Winterthur, on 7th May, 1942.

In 1939 he conducted a Parsifal and the Wagner repertoire at Covent Garden in London.

As a conductor Weingartner was a sober, scholarly interpreter of the classics, without exaggerated romantic vehemence that was fashionable in the early 1900's. As an artist of conservative view and unemotional renderings, he was a complete antithesis to Mahler, Bruno Walter or Furtwangler, and it was unfortunate that he was set up in opposition to them without wishing to do so by blind partisanship and political interference. His recorded Beethoven Symphonies and Overtures are definitely models of sanity, understanding and scholarly interpretation and his Brahms is devoid of overdone sentimentality accentuating the composer's classical side.

As a composer Weingartner was very much influenced by the old masters, whom he knew so well. It is the lack of creative originality that shows in his many operas, symphonies and chamber works, though it must be admitted that he produced varied and interesting musical fare from time to time. One of his operas the "Dame Kobold" had quite a box office success in 1916. His most ambitious work is a Trilogy after Oresteia of Aeschylus (1925). However, his fame now rests on his recordings and it seems that he will be remembered by those.

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LUCILLE MARCEL
(1887-1921).

Lucille Marcel was born in New York City around 1887, and died in Vienna on 22nd June, 1921. Her name was Wasself, daughter of a city druggist. She studied in Berlin and in Paris with Jean de Reszke, who recommended her to the Vienna Opera where she made her debut in the role of Elektra on 24th March, 1908, conducted by Weingartner. When Weingartner left Vienna in 1910, she went with him, and married him in 1911. She was Weingartner's third wife. She became principal soprano in Hamburg, Darmstadt, and later in Vienna. When Weingartner crossed the ocean she made her debut in Boston on 14th February, 1912, in the part of Tosca. She also created Bizet's Djamileh there. She lived the rest of her short life in Vienna.

Lucille Marcel made a few operatic recordings and a few song records, always accompanied on the piano or by an orchestra conducted by her husband. These recordings are rare and much sought after.

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